

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

USINT BAGHDAD UNN

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USLIAISON OFFICE PEKING

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 9244

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PLO, CH, VS, KN, XF

SUBJECT: FATAH DELEGATION IN PEKING

REF: BEIRUT 7611 (NOTAL)

1. PALESTINE NEWS AGENCY, WAFA, CONFIRMED JULY 18 THAT
PALESTINIAN DELEGATION UNDER LEADERSHIP OF ABU HIHAD (KHALIL
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AL WAZIR) HAS TRAVELLED TO PEKING. SO FAR AS WE CAN DETER-

MINE AT THIS TIME, DELEGATION REPRESENTS FATAH ONLY AND INCLUDES, AMONG OTHERS, HANI AL HASAN (ABU AL HASAN) AND ABU MAHIR (MUHAMMED GHUNAYM) BOTH HIGH-RANKING OFFICIALS. DELEGATION, WHICH REPORTEDLY WILL ALSO VISIT SAIGON AND NORTH KOREA, APPARENTLY DEPARTED DAMASCUS FOR PEKING EVENING JULY 16.

2. PRO-FEDAYEEN DAILY "AS SAFIR" JULY 17 PRINTED COMMENTS BY ABU AL HASAN ON FATAH'S RELATIONS WITH CHINA, STRESSING HIGH RANK OF THE FATAH DELEGATION TO PEKING. IN COURSE HIS REMARKS, FATAH NOTABLE STRESSED THAT PEKING DOES NOT RPT NOT RECOGNIZE ISRAEL AND DOES NOT INTEND TO EXTEND RECOGNITION. HE ALSO UNDERLINED CONTENTION THAT PEKING HAS NOT ENGAGED IN EFFORTS TO DIRECT OR DICTATE POLICY TO PALESTINIANS.

3. COMMENT: LOCAL OBSERVERS DISCERN CONSIDERABLE SIGNIFICANCE IN FACT THAT HIGH-LEVEL FATAH GROUP VISITING PEKING AT THIS TIME. THERE GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT VISIT, WHICH HIGHLIGHTS FATAH'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CHINESE, IS DIRECTED IN LARGE PART TOWARD MOSCOW, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF QUESTION MARK WHICH HAS HUNG OVER SOVIET/PLO RELATIONS SINCE 'ARAFAT'S LAST VISIT TO USSR IN APRIL/MAY OF THIS YEAR. WE KNOW THAT 'ARAFAT AND OTHER PLO "MODERATES" HAVE BEEN QUITE CONCERNED WITH INDICATIONS THAT SOVIETS TOYING WITH IDEA OF REESTABLISHING RELATIONS WITH TEL AVIV AND WE SUSPECT THEY HARBOR SUSPICIONS OF SOVIET INTENTIONS WITHIN CONTEXT OF EVENTUAL POLITICAL SETTLEMENT IN MIDDLE EAST. BY FOCUSING SPOTLIGHT ON CHINESE FACTOR AT THIS TIME, 'ARAFAT PROBABLY HOPES TO SIGNAL TO SOVIETS THAT HE IS NOT RPT NOT COMPLETELY DEPENDENT ON THEIR GOODWILL AND THAT MOSCOW CANNOT TAKE PALESTINIAN CARD FOR GRANTED IN ITS MIDDLE EASTERN MANEUVERINGS.

4. WE SUSPECT AS WELL THAT PEKING VISIT IS RELATED TO APPARENT FATAH DECISION TO STEP UP FEDAYEEN OPERATIONS WITHIN ISRAELI-HELD TERRITORY. JULY 4 BOMBING IN JERUSALEM AS WELL AS ABORTED ATTEMPT JULY 18 AT LYDDA AIRPORT (FBIS TA181452YLN FOR WHICH FATAH HAS CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY, TEND TO CONFIRM OUR PREVIOUS BELIEF (REFTEL) THAT PLO "MODERATES," INCLUDING FATAH, SEE NECESSITY AT THIS JUNCTURE OF ESCALATING ACTIVITIES IN WEST BANK AND ISRAEL PROPER. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, CONFIDENTIAL

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'ARAFAT'S THINKING ON THIS QUESTION IS PROBABLY INFLUENCED BY DETERMINATION NOT RPT NOT TO PERMIT "REJECTIONISTS" TO GET AHEAD OF HIM IN "ARMED STRUGGLE" WITHIN "OCCUPIED HOMELAND." APPARENT INVOLVEMENT OF "PALESTINE STRUGGLE FRONT" IN WEEKEND'S FRACAS AT METULLAH (FBIS TA181451Y) KEEPS THIS IMPETUS ALIVE. BUT "MODERATES" ARE LIKELY ALSO TO HAVE DETERMINED THAT TIMES REQUIRE FORCEFUL REMINDERS OF PLO'S CAPACITY FOR TROUBLE-MAKING FOR THEIR OWN SAKE. WE BELIEVE 'ARAFAT, IN COMMON WITH

JUMEROUS OTHER LOCAL OBSERVERS, IS UNCERTAIN WHETHER POLITICAL SETTLEMENT IS POSSIBLE OR NOT. BUT, HE AND HIS "MODERATE" COLLEAGUES UNQUESTIONABLY WISH TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT, SHOULD PROGRESS CONTINUE TOWARD POLITICAL SOLUTION OF ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT, ALL INVOLVED WILL BE AWARE OF PLO DETERMINATION NOT RPT NOT TO BE FROZEN OUT. WE FRANKLY DO NOT KNOW WHETHER SOVIETS HAVE BEEN COUNSELLING 'ARAFAT TO GO EASY ON "STRUGGLE" FACET OF HIS "TALK AND FIGHT" STRATEGY. PLO DOUBTS ABOUT SOVIET INTENTIONS, HOWEVER, ARE PROBABLY GENUINE ENOUGH IN ANY CASE, TO MAKE UP-GRADING OF CHINESE CONNECTION WORTHWHILE INSURANCE. SHOULD USSR DECIDE TO EXERT PRESSURE ON 'ARAFAT TO KEEP SITUATION QUIET BEFORE RPT BEFORE PLO DECIDES THAT IT HAS ADQUATE REASON SUSPECT THAT CALM WILL SERVE PLO, RATHER THAN SOVIET, INTERESTS, 'ARAFAT WOULD PROBABLY LIKE TO BE IN POSITION TO SEEK CHINESE MORAL AND POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR HIS REFUSAL.

5. FINALLY, PLO SPOKESMEN HAVE PERSISTENTLY EXPRESSED PUBLICLY EXPECTATION THAT ME SITUATION TENDING TOWARD EVENTUAL RESUMPTION OF GENERALIZED HOSTILITIES. WHETHER THEY ARE AS CERTAIN OF THIS TREND AS THEY PRETEND OR NOT, IT APPEARS LIKELY THAT FATAH SEES THE NEED TO PREPARE FOR SUCH EVENTUALITY. SOME OBSERVERS IN BEIRUT ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT DELEGATION TO PEKING, WHICH THEY CLAIM CONTAINS SEVERAL FATAH "MILITARY EXPERTS," WILL BE SOLICITING SUBSTANTIAL ARMS SHIPMENTS FROM CHINA. SAME SOURCES SUGGEST THAT USSR HAS NOT RPT NOT BEEN COMPLETELY FORTHCOMING RE FATAH REQUESTS FOR "SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS" AND 'ARAFAT THEREFORE SEEKING THESE ARMS FROM CHINA.

6. WE WOULD, OF COURSE, WELCOME ADDITIONAL INFO ON FATAH DELEGATION'S ACTIVITIES IN CHINA AND ELSEWHERE IN FAR EAST, AS WELL AS INDICATIONS OF SOVIET REACTIONS TO VISIT.
GODLEY

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